Ouida Word Dickey is a name synonymous with Berry College.

For 72 years, she has served her alma mater with exceptional dedication, vision, and perseverance, distinguishing herself as a student, teacher, administrator, and tireless volunteer. Her influence and accomplishments are such that she deserves mention among the proud pantheon of women – Martha Berry, Emily Vanderbilt Hammond, Louise Carnegie, Kate Macy Ladd, and Gloria Shatto among them – who have helped to shape Berry’s history.

With the approach of Dr. Dickey’s 90th birthday July 27, fellow alumni, former students, esteemed colleagues, loyal friends, and devoted family are rallying to express their love and appreciation by raising funds to name the heart of the Berry Alumni Center, the living room, in her honor. Fittingly, gifts to the $500,000 Ouida Dickey Birthday Challenge will support the planned renovation of Ford Auditorium, another Berry icon marking its 90th birthday in 2018.

An educator’s life

Ouida Word came to Berry from Wildwood, Fla., in 1946, the only one of 11 siblings to attend college. She graduated in 1950 with degrees in English and business and soon after married Dr. Garland Dickey, a pioneer of Berry’s intercollegiate athletics program. Their daughters, Angela and Jennifer, followed in their footsteps as Berry alumni.

After graduation, she had the privilege of working for Walter Johnson, Alumni Association secretary. She then taught public school while earning her master’s degree and doctorate before returning to Berry for good in 1956. In the years to come, she led the development of many notable advances for Berry, including the computer science program, Executive Round Table, Center for Economic Education, Office of Institutional Research, and Freshman Year Experience program.

Dr. Dickey retired in 1999, but her commitment to Berry never waned. She was president of both the Berry Alumni Association and the Daughters of Berry and today is a lifetime member of the Berry Alumni Council. She is also an authority on Berry history, having edited, authored, or co-authored several books about the institution.

Accolades include recognition as Georgia Business Educator of the Year and receipt of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Georgia Council on Economic Education. She is also the recipient of many of Berry’s highest honors, including the Alumni Association’s Distinguished Achievement Award, the Lifetime Voice of Berry Award, and the Eleana M. Garrett Award for Meritorious Advising and Caring. She is the only Berry College alumna to be awarded an honorary doctorate by the school.

Worthy tribute

Before she was a legend, young Ouida Word studied and worked in the Ford living room, which was then a library. It was there that she honed her command of the English language. With our gifts, we can make that same space a place of honor for her while at the same time helping to enhance the cultural life of the campus and the educational and artistic experience for Berry students.

All donors can double the impact of their generosity thanks to $250,000 in matching funds. Those committing $2,500 or more (before the match) will be recognized on a donor wall. We are already more than halfway to our goal. With your help, we can reach it by her birthday in July.

Make your gifts online at www.berry.edu/gift or mail a check to Berry College Advancement Office, P.O. Box 490069, Mount Berry, GA 30149-0069. Contact Scott Breithaupt at sbreithaupt@berry.edu or 706-236-2253 for more details.